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SENSITIVE
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DEPT ALSO FOR WHA/BSC
G/TIP FOR BARBARA FLECK AND MARK FORSTROM
WHA/PPC FOR SCOTT MILLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: URUGUAY TAKES TIP REPORT IN STRIDE; WANTS TO DO
BETTER

REF: A. STATE 57481 B. STATE 58560 C. MONTEVIDEO 92

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Poloffs provided a copy of the 2008 report and discussed trafficking in persons in separate meetings with the MFA Office of Human Rights, the Deputy Minister of Culture and Education and the Director of Immigration. GOU officials were ready for positive dialog about the report, stressed that the GOU takes TIP very seriously, and while the need for more action remains, Uruguay feels it is among the leaders in Latin American for combating TIP. Media coverage on the TIP report was fact-based and included extensive quotes directly from the translated text provided on the Embassy's website and press release. Embassy also distributed translated copies of the report to government, civil society and other interested parties. END SUMMARY.

IS THERE A TIER ONE AND HALF?

2. (SBU) In separate meetings on June 3 and 4, poloffs met with the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture Filipe Michelini (his ministry has the lead on domestic human rights issues), the Director of Immigration Jesus Roberto de Mello and his deputy Beatriz Pintos, and with Cristina Mansilla from the MFA's human rights office. All of these officials agreed that trafficking in persons was an important issue for the GOU and that while more needs to be done, the government continues to make progress. Michelini and Pintos appreciated the important dialog the annual TIP report offered, although they reiterated the GOU's long-held preference for multi-lateral reports over "unilateral" ones such as ours. Each of the officials highlighted the interagency committee they participated in, the National Committee for the Eradication of Commercial and Non-Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. This committee regularly brings together four ministries, at least three NGOs, and two UN representatives to address and follow this aspect of trafficking.

3. Our interlocutors felt that Uruguay was a leader on anti-TIP issues in South America, with strong national laws, stiff sentences, active prosecutions wherever possible and support of victim protection efforts within the capacity of its limited resources. Michelini also stressed that the GOU actively participated in international fora to combat human trafficking. For example, Uruguay will host the second annual OAS meeting on trafficking in persons later this year, and it

embraces training opportunities from the U.S. and other countries with advanced law enforcement and immigration techniques.

¶4. (SBU) Pintos and de Mello took particular issue with the standard report text for Tier Two countries that states, the GOU "does not fully comply with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking." While she admitted Uruguay's limitations in combating (due primarily to limited resources) trafficking, this stark language struck her as unfair as the "significant efforts of Uruguay were hardly less than minimum."

MEDIA REACTION

¶5. (U) Media coverage on the TIP report was fact-based and included extensive quotes directly from the translated text provided on the Embassy's website and statement by the Ambassador issued in our press release. Three leading dailies reported the increase in anti-TIP measures over the last year, especially the passage of new TIP legislation that was a specific recommendation in previous versions of the TIP Report. Each paper directly quoted from Ambassador Baxter's June 4 press statement that congratulated the GOU, but stressed the need for continued collaborative efforts. One report focused on the need for assistance to victims, noting that Uruguayan experts also have been calling for improvement in this area.

¶6. (U) The TIP report's release was timely, following recent extensive media coverage of several TIP-related crimes including the high profile arrests in the case of a young girl who was prostituted by her parents, and an 11-year old girl who was drugged by a family friend who then took pornographic photos of her.

COMMENT

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: The GOU took the report seriously, and expressed its interest in continuing our dialog on TIP and human rights issues in general. While its resources are limited, it wants to do more. GOU officials consider themselves to be ahead of the curve within the region and want to and they point out that trafficking is a relatively new concept and growing phenomenon. The GOU would likely embrace any assistance or training offered to improve its capacity to eliminate trafficking in persons. Post will continue to seek ways to work with the GOU and civil society to support this, such as the proposal to combat TIP submitted by IOM in ref C. END COMMENT.

Baxter